

FOREWORD

GOODBYE, DAD!*

*Joseph Randolph P. Barlongay***

As I woke up this morning, tears flowed down my cheeks. Today marks the sixth day after my father passed away. It was last Friday, April 30, 2004, when I lost a piece of my heart with the death of my Dad. It is a painful loss — one that slices through the bones and penetrates into the soul. Yet, knowing Dad, I am sure that he is now smiling and looking at us from the heavens, particularly overwhelmed by the outpouring of your love, concern and support to his bereaved family. If friends were indeed treasures, then we can all say that Professor Samilo N. Barlongay was a very rich man. You, his beloved friends and distinguished colleagues in the academe, made my father a very rich man. We are all his treasures.

We were all shocked by the news of his passing. Perhaps some of us came to know of his death through the newspapers, text messages, or from friends. As a natural reaction, we all wanted to know the cause of his death. After all, despite his lean frame, we all knew Professor Barlongay as a strong, healthy, energetic and dynamic work horse.

Dad passed away at around 7:30 PM, in Subic Bay Medical Center. I was not there at his bedside when he gasped for his last breath. I was then in Quezon City, preparing to drive all the way to Subic with my wife Yek, my brother Darrell, and my brother-in-law Jess. He had been confined in the hospital for almost a week when the Lord called him into His arms. My father died of pancreatic cancer, which doctors describe as an insidious disease, one that brings rapid weight loss and inflicts excruciating pain to its hapless victim. Our family discovered that he was sick around two months ago. The cancer had already metastasized to his liver. The doctors gave Dad six months to live — six months, so short a time for a man who still longed to help others despite his condition.

Those six months never came.

Dad knew he was dying. Despite his illness and the pain that visited him, Dad chose to suffer in silence and keep the pain to himself. Perhaps, he did not

* This was the Barlongay family's response to the eulogies presented by the University of the Philippines, College of Law faculty and students at the necrological services in honor of Professor Samilo N. Barlongay, held at 3PM of May 6, 2004, at Chapel 5, La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. *Cite as* Randy Barlongay, Foreword, *Goodbye Dad!*, 79 PHIL. L.J. 1, (page cited) (2004).

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want his family to be enslaved by worry and anxiety. Being the workhorse that he was, he still taught his Political Review and Local Government classes at the University of the Philippines, College of Law. He still traveled out of town to conduct his Mandatory Continuing Legal Education and Bar Review Lectures. That is very typical of Professor Sammy Barlongay.

Last Sunday was the last time I saw my Dad alive. He lost a lot of weight. He was skinny but was still in a fighting stance. His mind was as sharp as ever. I visited him in Subic, where he asked me to help him submit the grades for his Local Government class, which were due last Friday, April 30. He asked me to call up Linda, from the Office of the College Secretary. I appealed to him to just take it easy, knowing his fragile condition. But Dad denied my urgent motion for extension to submit the grades – with finality. He really wanted to submit the grades on time. According to him, April 30 was the University deadline. It was a wish that we had to fulfill. And we did.

On the morning of April 30, my wife and I submitted the grades. That evening, he passed away.

That was how my father died. Yet with all candor, I believe that the way he died is not as important as the way he lived and loved. Professor Sammy Barlongay fell in love with teaching, and the profession molded him into one of its greatest stalwarts. In his wake, his students in UP all attested that Professor Barlongay was their icon and idol. He was one of a few professors who still had the genuine passion for teaching and the sincere concern for his students' welfare. His commitment and dedication to his chosen craft is incomparable. He loved teaching at his alma mater, the UP College of Law, which according to him is the cauldron from which great lawyers spring forth.

He was proud of UP Law and its people. He was proud of his colleagues in the academe. He was proud of his students. He was proud of you.

From the eulogies and stories you have shared with us, we again relive the privilege of knowing who Sammy Barlongay really was. Through your reaffirmation, we are once more enriched by the knowledge that my father was indeed well-loved, well-admired and well-respected by many. To his family, that very thought alone consoles us, and showers us with strength and courage in this moment of unspeakable grief and sorrow. His death is a great loss to us, to the country, to the community, to the academe, to public service – to everyone who still believes, dreams of and hopes for a clean and honest government.



Professor Samilo N. Barlongay (1938-2004)

We all have fond memories of Sammy Barlongay. To some, Sammy has been a good friend, a classmate, a *kumpadre*,¹ a colleague, a mentor. To me, he was a responsible, caring and loving father. He was expressive of his love, and was never ashamed of showing his love and affection for his family even in public. He would call us pet names and would still hug and kiss Ate, Darrell and myself, as if we were still little children.

He was also an inspiring mentor and a friend. To his children, he was our hero, still is, and forever will be. He was the reason why I became a lawyer. When I took the 1998 Bar Examinations, he found time, despite his hectic schedule to lecture me on his *terra firma*, Political Law. Dad provided me with Bar review materials, encouraged me, showered me with assurances, and even bought my food during the breaks between the examinations. During those four grueling Sundays of September, he was present in the vicinity of the Bar Examination site in Taft Avenue. We even shared the same bed in the hotel during those memorable weekends of September. Dad was always there to support and tell me that everything will be all right.

In the times that his children did something good or noble, or achieved something that made him proud, he would always lift our spirits up with his affirming words, “Barlongay *yata yan*!”²

Sammy Barlongay was a seemingly infinite source of inspiration for those who knew him. The Cuban patriot, poet and essayist Jose Marti opines that men are like stars: some generate their own light, while others reflect the brilliance they receive. To my mind, my father, Sammy Barlongay, was a star of the first kind. In his life, he generated his own light and let others discover their own brilliance. This is especially true for me, for his children, and for his students. In His ultimate wisdom, God Almighty deemed it fit to bless my Dad with that rare gift of acting as a beacon to others, and to show them the right path. Dad did this without being self-righteous. Thus, when he died, it was as if a rare and great light had gone out in the vast skies, yet one who made all others shine even brighter.

For all these, I consider Dad as my hero. He left us with a legacy of selfless service – one that makes him, in my book, a great man. Remember that the true test of greatness is the page of history and that the hallmark of a truly great man lies in his ability to sow seeds of hope, justice and love in the hearts of other men.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that a good name smells sweeter than the finest moment. More than anywhere else, this biblical passage finds deeper truth and relevance in the life of Sammy Barlongay who has blessed his children and grandchildren not only with a good name, untarnished with the spoils of ephemeral concerns, but with the legacy of public service and a genuine commitment to the

¹ Approximately, a close friend and confidante.

² “That’s a Barlongay!”

cause of justice and the rule of law. His prestigious Philippine Legion of Honor Award, Degree of Officer, for his Outstanding Public Service, given by the President of the Philippines on behalf of the Filipino people, is testament to Professor Sammy Barlongay's commitment to serve.

As I close this simple tribute to the Honorable Samilo N. Barlongay, may I share with you the beautiful prose of the 28th President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson: There is something better, if possible, that a man can give other than his life. That is his living spirit to a service that is not easy, to resist counsels that are hard to resist, to stand against purposes that are difficult to stand against.

In essence, Wilson's words remind us of the life and times of the Honorable Samilo N. Barlongay. This is also a challenge for all of us to work and to serve like he did, to teach with the same passion and commitment he nurtured in his heart, to view public service from the eyes of one who was born to teach, born to inspire and born to serve – from the eyes of Professor Samilo Barlongay.

Dad, may I just tell you that your family and friends miss you a lot. I will miss you on my birthday on May 16, ten days from now. Thank you very much for making us who we are today. We love you very much. As always, Mommy, Ate Lani, Darrell, Jess, Yek, Eden and I, together with Tito Nito,³ Tita Baby and her family, Tita Naty, Tita Cyd, Annaliza and your *apos*⁴ promise to make you proud. In your life, we loved you with all our hearts and owe everything we have to you and Mom. Please guide your family as we lead our respective lives without you. Goodbye Dad, but only for now. Godspeed in your journey to Heaven, where you truly belong. We shall always remember.

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Professor Samilo N. Barlongay was the consistent valedictorian of his elementary and high school. He graduated at the top of his Pre-Law (Associate of Arts) class, was among the top ten of his University of the Philippines, College of Law class, and a member of the College's Order of the Purple Feather. He also held a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration from the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School. He was a man of vast and varied experience and accomplishments, having served in the executive and judicial branches, in a constitutional office, in local government, in the academe, and in the private practice of law.

³ "Tito" is a Filipino word that means uncle, and is sometimes used to address a close male family friend who is much older than the speaker. "Tita" means aunt.

⁴ Grandchildren.

He started his career in public service at the Malacanang Legal Office, Office of the President, where he rose from the ranks to become Presidential Staff Director for Legal Affairs. In 1983, he was appointed and served as Judge of the Regional Trial Court of Valenzuela, and then the RTC of Manila.

In 1987, then President Corazon Aquino appointed him as Assistant Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs and later concurrently appointed him as Deputy Executive Secretary, Office of the President. Subsequently, he was appointed as Commissioner of the Civil Service Commission, and was Acting CSC Chairman several times. After his CSC term, he left the public service and engaged in private practice. He was also formerly the City Administrator of the City of Malabon.

As a Career Executive Service Officer, Rank II, he served as Chairman of the Philippine Retirement Authority and was a Board of Foreign Service Examinations member. Among other significant projects, he participated as Co-Director of the Joint UP Law Center-Office of the President Committee that drafted provisions of the then proposed Constitution, which was submitted to the 1986 Constitutional Commission as resource materials. He was also a member of the Constitutional Revision Group under the Presidential Assistant for Special Concerns, which studied and drafted proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution.

For more than 24 years since 1977, he has been a part time Law Professor (Professorial Lecturer) of the UP College of Law. He taught various subjects there, namely, Political Law Review, Administrative Law, Public Officers, Local Government, and Election Law. Later, he also became a Bar Reviewer of the UP Bar Review Institute, and a lecturer of the UP Law Center and the Philippine Judicial Academy. Professor Barlongay was also a sought-after lecturer at the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Lectures held all over the country. For two consecutive years, specifically in 2001 and 2002, he was named Bar Examiner in Political and Public International Law.

In recognition of his commitment, integrity and outstanding public service, he was conferred the prestigious Philippine Legion of Honor Award, Degree of Officer, on June 30, 1993, by then President Fidel V. Ramos, on behalf of the Filipino People.

For an example of Professor Barlongay's contribution to the Philippine Law Journal, see Censorship in the Mails, 35 PHIL. L.J. 1219 (1960).